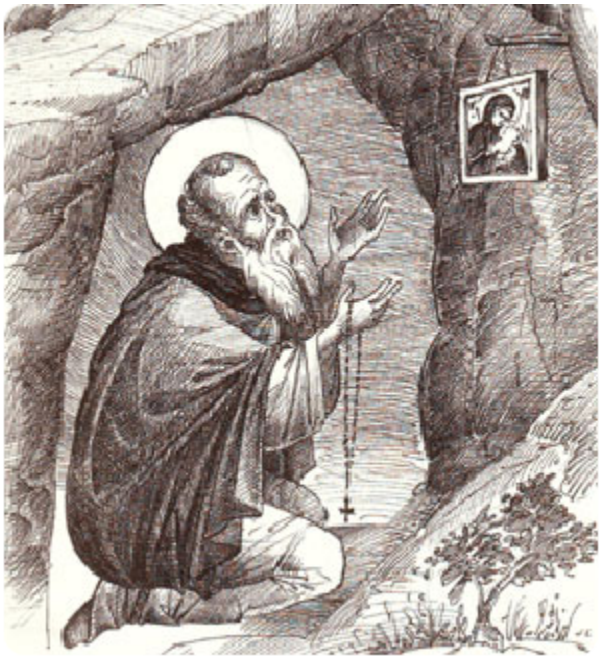
Monophysite or Orthodox?

Narrations from the Spiritual Meadow

The *Spiritual Meadow* (also known as the *Pratum spirituale, Leimonarion Λειμωνάριον*, or *New Paradise*) is a Greek book by John Moschus (d. 619 or 634) written in the late sixth to early seventh century. The text comprises anecdotes from Palestinian and Egyptian monasteries from John's travels with Sophronius [later Patriarch of Jerusalem], his friend, as they seek spiritual edification. It contains several hundred narratives, biographies, and a collection of sayings.

An angel of the Lord asks a simple Elder who had communion with the Severians to clarify his faith before he dies.



Abba George, the priest of the Scholarians' coenobium, told us that a hesychast Elder in Monidia was very philanthropic. Still, he was naive in his faith and communed indiscriminately wherever he found a liturgy.

So one day, an angel of God appeared to him and said to him: "Tell me, Geronda, if you die, how do you want us to bury you? As the Egyptian monks bury, or as the Jerusalemites?"

The Elder then answered him and said: "I do not know."

Then the angel said to him, "Think about it, and I'll come back three weeks later, and you tell me."

Then the Elder went to another Geronda and told him what he had heard from the angel. So when the Elder heard it, he was stunned by what he heard; he gazed at him for a long time and said to him, moved by God: "Where do you receive the Holy Mysteries?"

He responds and says, "Wherever I find it."

Then the Elder said to him: "Do not judge it right any longer to receive communion outside the holy Catholic and apostolic Church, which commemorates the four holy councils, Nicæa of 318 (God-bearing Fathers), and Constantinople of 150 and Ephesus I of 200 and Chalcedon of 630. And when the angel comes, tell him: 'I want to be buried like the Jerusalemites.'"

Three weeks later, the angel came and said to the Elder, "What happened, Geronda? Have you thought about it?"

Then the Elder said, "I want to be buried like the Jerusalemites."

The angel says to him, "Well, well." And he immediately surrendered the soul. All this was done so that the Elder would not lose his efforts and be condemned along with the heretics.[1]

The Patriarch Jacob dissuades Abba Zosimas from simply living with a Monophysite monk.

THE LORD IS IN THIS
PLACE AND I DID NOT
KNOW IT. THIS IS NONE
OTHER THAN THE HOUSE
OF GOD AND THIS IS
THE GATE OF HEAVEN
PATRIARCH JACOB

This is a testimony and a similar vision that the God-fearing Abba Zosimas had. He was a stranger and a wanderer with a pure soul and an upright character. He was even vouchsafed to be a monk near the venerable Peter and to keep his faith unadulterated. Zosimas, after living the monastic life in Raithu and on Mount Sinai with the Orthodox fathers, as he told me, left there and came to Jerusalem. He was very fond of the way of life in these holy places and was constantly going back and forth to find a place of hesychia.

So he came to Bethel, where the patriarch Jacob saw the vision of the Ladder **2** and gained the sympathy of the monk who took care of this place. The monk constantly begged Zosimas to stay close to him and promised that he would ensure him an enviable hesychia. Then Abba Zosimas told him frankly that this would be impossible, for he had no communion with the apostates of Chalcedon.**3** But the other insisted and promised him that in this quiet place, he would not cause him any trouble in this regard and told him. "Stay here. You will chant with me and take care of this place."

As Zosimas was almost convinced by these proposals, he saw one night in his sleep the patriarch Jacob, whitewashed, venerable and thoughtful, dressed in a cloak and a staff in his hand, wandering around those places. At some point, she approached him and told him. "How do you, who have communion with the Orthodox, think of becoming a monk here? Do not break your faith in me, but quickly run away from the apostates, and you will lack neither goods nor hesychia nor what is necessary for you."

He departed and thus remained steadfast to the end in good works and the orthodox faith.**4**

Symbolic dream of a Syrian banker about his brother's Spiritual fornication.

Abba Theodore, the abbot of the old Lavra, told us that there were two Syrian banker brothers in Constantinople. And the older one says to the younger: "Let's go down to Syria, take our parental home." The younger asks him, "And why should we both leave the bank? Well, either you go down, and I'll stay here, or I go down, and you stay." So they agreed that the younger one should come down. And as soon as the youngest came down, after some time, the brother who stayed in Constantinople had a dream: a solemn Geronda who said to him: "Do you know that your brother fornicated with the tavern owner's wife?" After some time, he sees him again, saying to him: "Do you know that your brother fell into sin with the tavern owner's wife?"

Seeing him again, he was saddened. After a while, she saw him again for the third time and said to him: "Don't you know that your brother lost his freedom and rolled over with the wife of the tavern owner?" And from Constantinople, he writes to him in Syria, "Immediately and at once leave everything and return to Byzantium."

As soon as he got the letters, he left everything and went up to his brother. Then, as soon as the older brother saw him, he took him to the Great Church and began sadly accusing him and saying, "Is it good that you fornicated with the tavern owner's wife?"

When he heard this, the younger one began to swear by God the Almighty and say: "I know not what thou sayest, neither have I fornicated, nor known any woman in sin, except the lawful one."

As soon as the older brother heard this, he said, "Well, have you done anything more serious?"

He revealed this, "I don't think I have committed anything unseemly, except that I found monks of the Severus sect in our village. And because I did not know if it was evil, I came into sacramental communion with them. Otherwise, I don't think I did anything else."

Then the older brother understood that this was his fornication, that he left the holy Catholic Church and fell into the heresy of Severus the Acephalus, who was indeed a tavern-keeper and had disgraced and defiled the nobility of the Orthodox faith.**5**

NOTES

1. Ιωάννου Μόσχου, Λειμωνάριον σ. 195-196.
2. See. Genesis 28:10-22.
3. I.e. the Anti-Chalcedonians.
4. Δημ. Τσάμη, Το Γεροντικόν του Σινά, Σιναϊτικά Κείμενα 1, Εκδόσεις Ι. Μονής του Θεοβαδίστου Όρους Σινά, Θεσσαλονίκη, 1988, σελ. 127-129.
5. Ιωάννου Μόσχου, Λειμωνάριον ένθ. αν., σ. 212-213.

SAINT EUPHEMIA REVEALS
BY A MIRACLE THE TRUTH
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AND THE DELUSION OF
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AT THE FOURTH
ECUMENICAL COUNCIL
CHALCEDON
CONSTANTINOPLE
SAI
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